

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00

PRS-01 SP-02 L-01 PM-03 DODE-00 /031 W

-----016308 271505Z /43

P R 271352Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6699

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, MOPS, PFOR, ET, US

SUBJECT: EFFECT OF EMBASSY'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH
NAIROBI-BASED CORRESPONDENTS ON RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIAN
GOVT AND WITH PRESS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 7001

SUMMARY: ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS EXPRESSED ITS DIS-
PLEASURE OVER EMBASSY SUPPLYING NEWS TO WESTERN
CORRESPONDENTS, BOTH BY FOREIGN MINISTER DIRECTLY
TO CHARGE AND IN LETTER TO EDITOR IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED
"ETHIOPIAN HERALD." IN ORDER TO SERVE SHORT-TERM
OBJECTIVES OF PRESERVING RELATIONS, EMBASSY HAS IN-
STITUTED NEW POLICY OF TALKING ON TELEPHONE TO NAIROBI
JOURNALISTS ONLY ON MATTERS DIRECTLY CONCERNING US
CITIZENS AND US/ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. WOULD APPRECIATE
ADDRESSEES COMMENTS ON BALANCING LOCAL AND BROADER OB-
JECTIVES. END SUMMARY.

1. WE ARE IN A BIT OF A DILEMMA ON HOW TO HANDLE THE
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FREQUENT TELEPHONE CALLS FROM WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS
WHO ARE BASED IN NAIROBI. PRESS RELATIONS WERE HANDLED
BY USIS UNDER EMBASSY GUIDANCE UNTIL LATE APRIL WHEN
EPMG CLOSED USIS AND CONCURRENTLY THREW OUT WESTERN
CORESPONDENTS. SINCE THEN LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE
CALLS DIRECTLY TO THE EMBASSY HAVE BECOME FREQUENT
EVERY TIME THE CORRESPONDENTS SUSPECT THERE IS A WORTH-

WHILE STORY EITHER AS REGARDS INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN EVENTS OR RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND US. THEY ALSO CALL OTHER WESTERN EMBASSIES, OF COURSE. EMBASSY POLICY, ORIGINALLY SET BY TIENKEN, WAS FOR ALL CALLS TO BE HANDLED BY POL HANDLED BY POL COUNSELOR OR, IN HIS ABSENCE, POL OFFICER AND GENERALLY TO BE AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE AND PRUDENT. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT SUCH POLICY WAS BASED ON BELIEF THAT RESPONDING WITH AS MUCH UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION AS WAS AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY -- BOTH AS REGARDS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS -- BEST SERVED US INTERESTS.

2. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE (REFTEL PARA 9), FOREIGN MINISTER FELLEKE REBUKED EMBASSY IN ONLY VAGUELY VEILED MANNER FOR MEDDLING IN ETHIOPIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS BY BEING AN "OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC SOURCE" FOR STORIES CRITICAL OF ETHIOPIA COMING OUT OF NAIROBI. FELLEKE IS AN ATTENTIVE READER OF REUTERS TICKER AND IS WELL INFORMED ABOUT STORIES ON ETHIOPIA APPEARING IN WASHINGTON POST, NEW YORK TIMES, PARIS HERALD-TRIBUNE AND OTHER LEADING WESTERN EUROPEAN PAPERS. IN ADDITION, EPMG FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS OBVIOUSLY LISTEN TO VOA AND BBC AS MUCH OR MORE THAN RADIO MOSCOW.

3. IT WAS NO COINCIDENCE THAT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEARED IN DEC. 25 ISSUE OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED "ETHIOPIAN HERALD," ENTITLED "DIPLOMATS OR NEWS CORRESPONDENTS?" WRITER NOTED THAT BBC, VOA, DUETCHEWELLE (WHICH BROADCASTS IN AMHARIC), ETC., OFTEN PORTRAY "DISTORTED PICTURES ABOUT ON-GOING REVOLUTION AND THE SITUATION IN THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN WAR FRONTS. A LISTENER WOULD ALSO OBSERVE THAT THEY DELIVERATELY AND PERSISTENTLY TRY TO DEPICT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CARRYING OUT AN ACT OF REPRESSION AND TERROR. WHILE DOING SO, THEY REFUSE TO SEE THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, NAMELY ACT OF TERROR AND SABOTAGE BEING PERPETRATED BY REACTIONARY ELEMENTS." WHAT WRITER SAYS SURPRISES HIM MOST "IS THAT SOURCE OF SUCH DISTORTED AND BIASED NEWS ITEMS HAPPENS TO BE SOME DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL ACCREDITED TO GOVERNMENT OF SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA." HE POINTS OUT, AS IS TRUE, WESTERN MEDIA DO SPEAK OF DIPLOMATIC SOURCES FOR THEIR STORIES. HE THEN SPECULATES THAT CERTAIN DIPLOMATS HAVE TAKEN ON STRINGER ASSIGNMENTS AND SAYS DIPLOMATS MUST STOP ACTING AS PAID NEWS CORRESPONDENTS FOR THE GOOD OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND COUNTRIES THEY REPRESENT. LETTER ENDS WITH, "...

ACTING AS SELF-STYLED NEWS CORRESPONDENTS IS NOT
ONE OF THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIPLOMATS
WITH FULL DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY".

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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4. EMBASSY COULD MAKE CLAIM TO FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT ITS
ROLE IN INFORMING WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS HAS, ON BALANCE,
HELPED SCOTCH FANTASTIC STORIES OUT OF MOGADISCIO ABOUT
ETHIOPIAN MILITARY LOSSES AND OTHERS TENDING TO DEPICT SITUA-
TION IN ADDIS AS MORE OF A BLOODBATH THAN IT ACTUALLY IS.
IT IS DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, THAT EPMG WOULD SETTLE FOR ANYTHING
LESS THAN A DETERMINED EMBASSY ATTEMPT TO PUT BEST POSSIBLE
LIGHT ON EPMG SELF-AVOWED POLICY OF "RED TERROR," AND THIS,
OF COURSE, WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO DO.

5. IN VIEW OF GOVERNMENT INSPIRED THREAT IN NEWSPAPER
AND FELLEKE'S POINTING OF FINGER AT THIS EMBASSY, I BELIEVE OUR
IMMEDIATE GOAL OF PRESERVING DIP RELATIONS IS BEST SERVED BY
DECLINING TO COMMENT TO WESTERN PRESS OVER TELEPHONE ON ANY-
THING NOT DIRECTLY CONCERNING US CITIZENS IN ETHIOPIA AND
US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. I HAVE SO INSTRUCTED POL SECTION TO
FOLLOW THAT POLICY FOR TIME BEING. HOWEVER, I REALIZE THAT WE
MAY HAVE BROADER OBJECTIVES, NOT ONLY IN RELATION TO PRESS
BUT ALSO OVERALL IN THIS PART OF WORLD, WHICH NEED SERVING,
AND DO NOT WANT TO TAKE TOO PAROCHIAL A VIEW. HOWEVER, MERELY
ASKING PRESS NOT TO MAKE REFERENCE TO DIPLOMATIC SOURCES
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PROBABLY WOULD NOT DO TRICK EVEN IF THEY WERE WILLING, SINCE
PRESUMABLY LONG DISTANCE CALLS FROM NAIROBI ARE MONITORED
BY EPMG SECURITY.

6. I REALIZE THAT THERE IS NOT AN EASY ANSWER BUT WOULD
APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS ACTION AND INFO ADDRESSEES WOULD
LIKE TO MAKE, PARTICULARLY WHAT REACTION CAN BE EXPECTED
FROM NAIROBI PRESS CORPS AND ITS LIKELY IMPACT SHOULD EMBASSY
CONTINUE TO APPLY NEW POLICY EXPLAINED PARA 5.
MATHERON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELEPHONES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
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Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 129977
Secure: OPEN
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Subject: EFFECT OF EMBASSY'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH NAIROBI-BASED CORRESPONDENTS ON RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIAN GOVT AND WITH PRESS
TAGS: PDIP, MOPS, PFOR, ET, US
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Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8c660efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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